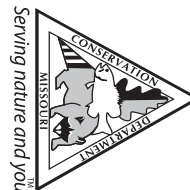




Making Tracks

Editor: Holly Berthold, *Metro Media Specialist*
Layout: Denise Lehmann



Making Tracks
Missouri Department of Conservation
2360 Hwy D
St. Charles, MO 63304
www.mdc.mo.gov

Forest Park Office

5595 Grand Dr., St. Louis, MO 63112
For reservations call (314) 877-1309.

22

Wednesday

Do the Locomotion!

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
& 11 a.m. – Noon

(Ages 3-6) How do animals move about? They “Do the Locomotion!” Find out through pretend play, song and storybook. We’ll also observe live animals in motion. *Naturalist Program Supervisor: Colleen Scott.* (Reservations begin February 22.)



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Making Tracks

St. Louis Regional Calendar of Events

March 2006

Volume 06, Number 03



Purple Martins...Coming Soon to a House Near You!

by Tamie Yegge, Nature Center Manager

As faithful as an old friend, each spring brings the return of the purple martin. For those who provide homes for these beautiful birds, it is with great eagerness and excitement they await the arrival of the “scouts.” With a little bit of care and commitment, once you’ve attracted a group of martins to your birdhouse, they will return year after year with their families to spend their summers with yours.

Purple martins are the largest of the North American swallows, and are easy to recognize by the purplish-blue iridescent sheen of their feathers. They are the only species of martin in Missouri. Their arrival from their wintering grounds in the Amazon River basin begins with the appearance of adults returning to previously successful nesting sites. Four to six weeks later brings the young adults looking for new nesting sites to colonize. These birds associate themselves with people and in Missouri they seem to be almost totally dependent on the nest boxes provided by their loving landlords. Aside from how interesting they are to watch as they fly about, nest and raise their young, they are extremely efficient in keeping down insect populations. As payment for their dwellings, each bird consumes hundreds of insects per day!

Purple martins prefer to nest in groups, so apartment-style housing or groups of suspended gourds painted white are best. Location is critical if you are going to attract a new group of birds. Martins have very specific space requirements. Homes should be in the center of an open area, at least 40 feet from trees that are taller than the house. In general, the farther away the pole is from the trees, the better. The pole itself should be 10-20 feet tall and be clear of shrubs and vines. The houses shouldn’t be erected at the first sign of the scouts, but instead, about four weeks later. The scouts are returning to established home sites and will not be interested in your newly offered real estate. If the houses are put up too early, they will be taken over quickly by other birds that will chase off the martins, tear up their nests, break their eggs and kill the nestlings.

If you’ve had a successful relationship with a martin colony in the past but they haven’t returned, there are several common explanations. Any changes to the houses provided in past years, including replacing a worn-out house or changing its location, will cause the birds to abandon the site. Too much interaction with competition or predators, including European starlings, house sparrows, snakes, raccoons, paper wasps and squirrels, will also take its toll. Finally, weather extremes will impact the martin population. These include high temperatures for sustained periods, late freezes or drought in which there is a high death rate to the group.

There are many resources to learn more about purple martins, how to attract and house them, and how to keep them coming back year after year. Check out www.missouriconservation.org and search “purple martin.” MDC also has a free publication to help people understand, enjoy and manage for this bird called *Missouri’s Purple Martins*. This booklet tells how to build and place martin houses, when to have them up (the first scouts arrive between March 10-20) and how to control competitors, predators and parasites. For a free copy of the booklet, writ to: Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City 65102-0180, and include a note requesting your copy.

A little preparation and hospitality will bring the purple martins back year after year for you to enjoy, just like an old friend.



2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304 Office hours are Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For reservations call (636) 441-4554 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From Hwy 40 take Hwy 94 south to Hwy D; turn west on Hwy D for approximately 2 miles. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy D. Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/stlouis/buschca/

4 Timberdoodles

Saturday 5:15 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

(Adults) Come see and hear timberdoodles in their natural habitat. Bring a chair, view the sunset and then watch and listen for the timberdoodles (*American woodcock*) to begin their courtship display shortly after sunset. This “nature show” belongs to one of the strangest members of the bird world. Learn how the timberdoodle locates and catches its food. *Volunteer Naturalist: Marvin Staloch.* (Reservations begin February 16.)

6 Here Comes Eastern Cottontail

Monday 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
& 11 a.m. – Noon

(Preschool Ages 3-6) What do you know about rabbits? These soft mammals are common in all counties of Missouri. With their long ears, large hind legs for hopping and a short, fluffy tail, they are easily identified. Come learn about wild rabbits: where they live, what they eat and how they are important to us. If the weather permits, we will take a short hike to look for these rascally rabbits. Bring an old sock to make a fun craft. *Volunteer Naturalists: Kathy Hellmann & Penny Elder.* (Reservations begin February 21.)



9 Purple Martin Time!

Thursday 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

(Ages 16 & up) Purple martins are on their way back to the St. Louis area from Brazil. Are you ready for their arrival? Learn how you can enjoy these beautiful insect-eating swallows in your own backyard. We will talk about purple martins, then cover tips for establishing and managing your own colony. *Volunteer Naturalist: Ed Leutwiler.* (Reservations begin February 23.)

14 Once Upon a Pond

Tuesday 10 a.m. – Noon

(Ages 3-6) Many interesting animals act as characters in the story of a pond. Join us to learn about them as we read books, make crafts and meet some face-to-face. We will also take a short walk to look at a pond. *Naturalist: Eileen Diskin.* (Reservations begin February 28.)

18 Wren House

Saturday 9 a.m. – Noon

(All Ages) Make your garden, deck or backyard more cheerful this summer. Invite one of the greatest songsters in the bird family to spend the summer. Learn about house wrens, build a wren house and get ready for a summer of song. *Volunteer Naturalist: Dick Baumann.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

21 Amazing Animal Antics

Tuesday 10 a.m. – Noon

(Ages 7-12) Bees that dance? Birds that run in place? Come and learn about some of the strange things that animals do and why they do them. We will also play several games to explore these behaviors.

Naturalist: Eileen Diskin. (Reservations begin March 7.)



28 Relax, You Have Worms!

Tuesday 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

(Ages 7-12) Greta the gardener is worried about her plants. Join her as she learns about worms and the role they play in our world. Please wear sturdy shoes, as we will be outside in the woods. *Naturalist: Shanna Raeker.* (Reservations begin March 14.)

Making Tracks
St. Louis Region Newsletter

Plan to Attend the 11th Annual Wetlands for Kids Event!

April 1st from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area

Kids and adults alike will have a great time at the 11th Annual Wetlands for Kids event being held this year on April 1st at August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area, 2360 Highway D in St. Charles. Wetlands for Kids takes place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and , offers hands-on activities and fun for all ages. The event offers many hands-on activities; you’ll see and feel wetland wildlife and fish, crawl through a beaver lodge, identify ducks as you make your way through the duck wing maze, observe water dogs making awesome retrieves, create wetland artwork, practice your skills at the archery and air rifle stations, watch how fishing flies are made, sample fish treats, learn about critters that live in the water, observe live wild birds of prey, and much more. Everyone is welcome and there’s plenty of room for groups. Concessions will be available for purchase.

No reservations are required and there is no cost for admission or parking. For more information call 636-441-4554. See you there!



Rockwoods Reservation

March 2006 Page 6

2751 Glencoe Road, Wildwood, MO 63038 Office hours are Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For reservations call (636) 458-2236 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-44 take Hwy 109 north 4 miles to Woods Avenue; left on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road. From Manchester Road take Hwy 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road. Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/stlouis/

4 Summer of Song
Saturday 9 a.m. – Noon
(All Ages) Make your garden, deck or backyard more cheerful this summer by inviting one of the greatest songsters in the bird family. Learn about house wrens, build a wren house and get ready for a summer of song. *Volunteer Naturalist: Dick Baumann.* (Reservations begin February 17.)

11 Soap-Making the Old Fashioned Way
Saturday 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
(Ages 16 & up) Join us to learn how to make soap the old-fashioned way, using lye and fat. Come and enjoy some good, clean fun! *Volunteer Naturalist: Jean Favara.* (Reservations begin February 24.)

12 Who’s Making Those Tracks?
Sunday 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
(All Ages) Tracking is an ancient art. Add a new dimension to your hiking trips: learn to read animal tracks and signs of some of Missouri’s wildlife. We will take a short hike to look for signs of wildlife. *Volunteer Naturalist: Jane Deschu.* (Reservations begin February 24.)

Toddling Into Nature: It’s Where You Live
Tuesday 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.
(Ages 3-6) Having a home is as important to wildlife as it is to us. Discover what makes a good habitat and what animals need for survival. *Naturalist: Anna-Lisa Tucker.* (Reservations begin February 28.)

17 Cave Exploration
Friday 10 a.m. – Noon
(Ages 7 & up) Enter the underground world of Rockwoods Cave to learn about a cave ecosystem and the importance wildlife plays in it. This hands-on exploration requires crawling on your stomach for several feet. Wear long pants and shirts with long sleeves, and bring your flashlight. Helmets will be provided. *Naturalist: Angela East.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

Fly Tying Bluegill Discovery Table
Saturday 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
(Ages 12 & up) Learn to tie the basic bluegill “rubber legs” pattern from our local expert. Then get outdoors and enjoy Missouri’s beautiful streams, ponds and lakes. *Volunteer Naturalist: Bob Ziegler.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

19 Journaling About Nature
Sunday 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
(Ages 10 & up) Join us to explore nature and your own unique means to record its beauty. Bring a chair and dress for an afternoon outside. *Volunteer Naturalist: Karen Staloch.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

22 Candle-Making
Wednesday 10 a.m. – Noon
(Ages 10 & up) Learn how early Americans utilized animals in the skill of candle-making and how the art has changed today. Each participant will make and take home a candle. *Naturalist: Anna-Lisa Tucker.* (Registration begins March 8.)

23 Cave Exploration
Thursday 10 a.m. – Noon
(Ages 7 & up) Enter the underground world of Rockwoods Cave to learn about a cave ecosystem and the importance wildlife plays in it. This hands-on exploration requires crawling on your stomach for several feet. Wear long pants and shirts with long sleeves, and bring your flashlight. Helmets will be provided. *Naturalist: Angela East.* (Reservations begins March 9.)

26 Winging It
Sunday 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
(All Ages) Join us as we explore the wonders of bird migration. Learn about birds that make their way through Missouri and what we can do to help our traveling friends. *Volunteer Naturalist: Sally Roberts.* (Reservations begin March 10.)

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

March 2006 Page 3

801 Strodtman Rd., St. Louis, MO 63138 Office hours are Wednesday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturday – Sunday from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

For reservations call (314) 877-6014 Wednesday through Sunday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-270 north take the Riverview Drive exit (last Missouri exit); go north approximately 2.8 miles. Riverview Drive becomes Columbia Bottom Road at its intersection with Larimore Road. The entrance is on the right-hand side. Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/areas/bottom/

9 Nemo Gone Wrong
Thursday 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
(Ages 6 & up) They’re loyal, friendly, protective and just great all-around companions. But, can our pets be a hazard to the environment? As the demand for exotic pets increases, the threat to our environment increases. Join us to gain a better understanding of the impact of pets on our environment and become more informed for the next time you select a pet. *Trail Ranger: James Jackson.* (Reservations begin February 23.)

Homeschool Program: It Takes A Lot Of Rot
Thursday 10 a.m. – Noon
(Ages 7-12) Find out what happens to plants and animals after they die. Learn about decomposition and why it is important to all living things. Come prepared to go outside to look for the decomposers. *Naturalist: Catherine McGrane.* (Reservations begin March 2.)

17 Amphibian Night Hike
Friday 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
(Families) Want to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with our “green” friends in the wetlands? Learn and discover as we identify frogs and toads by their unique songs! We will find out about the amazing life cycles of amphibians, take a hike and even put together our own “frog band.” Don’t miss it! *Volunteer Naturalist: Lisa Reid.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

18 Cultured Vultures
Saturday 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
(All Ages) Vultures are beautiful flyers in the sky but ugly scavengers on the ground. Learn how vultures effortlessly stay aloft for hours at a time and why they have ugly bald heads. Whether or not you like these “buzzards,” you’ll be happy to know you don’t have to eat what they eat. We will go outdoors in search of vultures, so dress for the weather. *Naturalist: Catherine McGrane.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

Alien Invaders: Defending Missouri’s Wild Areas
Saturday 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.
(Age 15 & up) Missouri is being invaded by exotic species through the air, land and sea. Many of these exotics can have detrimental effects on Missouri’s native ecosystems. You can help defend against these alien invaders. Learn which exotic species have been introduced into Missouri and how they have affected the environment. Discover what you can do to prevent harm to Missouri’s ecosystems by exotic species. *Volunteer Naturalist: Michael Gewin.* (Reservations begin March 3.)

Columbia Bottom Conservation Book Club
Thursday 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
(Adult Readers) Not able to make it last month? Well, it’s not too late. You can still join us for our book discussion and find out what books we’ve decided to read the rest of the year. They could be outdoors how-to books, educational or just good nature stories. So bring your coffee mug as well as your thoughts. We meet the fourth Thursday of each month. *Volunteer Naturalist: Denise Moorman.* (Reservations begin March 9.)



A Walk In the Woods: A Bird Walk For Beginners
Saturday 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.
(Ages 14 & up). Can you recognize crows, cardinals and robins but want to learn more about the birds in your park and neighborhood? Did you know you can identify birds by sound? It’s a big world of birds out there! A sure way to get acquainted is to get on their turf. Come to Columbia Bottom for a walk in the woods and learn some basics of bird-watching. *Volunteer Naturalist: Colleen Crank.* (Reservations begin March 10.)

11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122 Nature Center hours are daily from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
For reservations call (314) 301-1500 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice. From I-44 east in Kirkwood, take Watson Road, exit and turn north on Geyer Road. Follow Geyer Road 200 yards to Cragwold Road. Go 1 mile west on Cragwold Road. Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/powder/

2

Spring Blues

Thursday

10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

(Ages 7-12) Spring is upon us and many wonderful things are happening. Our state bird, the Eastern bluebird, begins nesting this time of year. Discover this delightful bird and some things you can do to encourage nesting in your area. We will construct bluebird boxes for you to take home. *Staff Naturalist: Jada Barhorst.* (Reservations begin February 16.)

9

Snake Bites!

Thursday

5:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

(Ages 10 & up) What did you have for breakfast today? Was it some cereal or a muffin? Did you have to stalk your elusive pancakes and quickly swallow them whole before another predator found you? I hope not. Luckily we don’t have to do this, but snakes do! Snakes have the big job of maintaining rodent populations and keeping out of sight. In this program, we’ll learn about the important role snakes play in our environment, and compare the different venomous and non-venomous feeding techniques by **watching a live feeding!** *Staff Naturalist: Kevin McCarthy.* (Reservations begin February 23.)

15

The Martins Are Coming!

Wednesday

10 a.m. – Noon

(Ages 6-10) This is the week that purple martins arrive back to the St. Louis area. After a long flight from South America, they will need insects and nesting sites. Participants will talk about the bird, help clean out the Powder Valley purple martin apartment house, and do some purple martin crafts. *Staff Naturalist: David Bradford.* (Reservations begin February 28.)

30

Springtime for Peepers!

Thursday

2 p.m.– 3:30 p.m.

(All Ages) Spring is officially here and spring peepers are one of the first amphibian species to begin their breeding calls. Come and learn about these frogs and other types of amazing amphibians who lead a “double life.” We’ll take an up-close look at some live animals and go on a short hike to spot them in the wild as they emerge from their winter retreats. *Staff Naturalist: Amy Anderson.* (Reservations begin March 15.)

Under Construction!

Over the next year Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center will be undertaking a major exhibit renovation and revitalization. During this time, all, or portions of the exhibits may be closed periodically so that work can be done safely and effectively. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause, but hope you will bear with us. The result will be a better, more enjoyable nature center for everyone!

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

Nature Films

March 4 & 5

9 a.m. – 10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Magic School Bus: Kicks Up a Storm

Eyewitness: Weather

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Birds of the Backyard: Winter into Spring

Cottontail

Murky Waters (& Snow Geese, etc.)

March 11 & 12

9 a.m. – 10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Magic School Bus: Hops Home

Eyewitness: Amphibian

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Missouri Outdoors TV Story Collections: Volume 10: Rivers & Streams

March 18 & 19

9 a.m. – 10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Just Kiddin’ Around Volume 2

Eyewitness: Reptile

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Missouri Outdoors TV Story Collections: Volume 11: Wildlife (Disc 16)

Watching Wildlife

March 25

Sorry, there will be no films shown.

March 26

9 a.m. – 10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Magic School Bus: Gets Planted

Eyewitness: Plant

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Missouri Outdoors TV Story Collections: Volume 8: Plants and Places

Dealing With Urban Wildlife

Shown in the Auditorium - Free of Charge - Groups Welcome!

Children’s films: 9 a.m. – 10 p.m. & 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

All Ages films: 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Films are subject to change.

No reservations necessary.

March Hallway Exhibit Artists

Art World Association

The Art World Association has been active in the arts since 1963 when it was founded as a fine arts and fine crafts organization. It is a nonprofit organization with professional and nonprofessional members, holding exhibitions in the county as well as the city of St. Louis. Some of the Art World Association’s gallery shows are: the Creative Arts on Ivanhoe, Union Avenue Christian Church, Powder Valley Nature Center, Phoenix Pottery, Comfort Inn, Harlin Museum, St. Peter’s Community Art Center, Jewish Center, plus many others over the years.

The Art World Association meets monthly at the First Congregational Church in Webster Groves. Monthly programs (demonstrations) are given after the regular meetings and focus on all types of media, such as oil & acrylic, watercolor, pastel, drawing, sculpture and jewelry making.


Powder Valley Nature Shop Special

A Paddler’s Guide to Missouri

Whether you enjoy the challenges of Ozark white water or just enjoy a lazy float down a prairie stream, you’ll appreciate the Department’s comprehensive guide to paddling in Missouri. Featuring an easy-to-use spiral binding and larger format maps than Oz Hawkley’s *Missouri Ozark Waterways*, this new guide cover 58 rivers, including the Mighty Missouri.

This new guide features updated maps of the rivers and streams found in the former guide, *Missouri Ozark Waterways*, plus map of five more rivers to explore.

Throughout the month of March this wonderful publication which normally is sold for \$6.00, can be yours for only \$4.80!



| Powder Valley Volunteer Milestones | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Bob Anderson..... | 3,200 hours |
| Ken Barket..... | 2,500 hours |
| Elizabeth Cosby..... | 100 hours |
| Ron Pohle | 1,900 hours |
| Bernadette Sieving..... | 700 hours |
| Cindy Taylor..... | 600 hours |
| Dick Wasson..... | 4,300 hours |
| Neva Wasson..... | 4,300 hours |
| Rosemary Witte..... | 2,800 hours |